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ABSTRACT

Among the problems facing the United States, the following are most outstanding: (1) the population explosion; (2) pollution; (3) the war in Vietnam; (4) racism and inequality; (5) violence symptomatic of internal disorder; and (6) drug abuse. If institutionalized education wishes to develop human character and to perpetuate social ideals, administrators, educators, and students must unite to propose solutions to these sources of distress. (AF)

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Opening General Session
Sunday Evening, March 1

THE TROUBLED WORD: MANDATE FOR CHANGE IN THE TROUBLED CAMPUS*

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In their wisdom, the program committee asked that these remarks which open the 25th National Conference on Higher Education should deal with the world and society at large--leaving to others on the program the task of reporting on and analyzing the campus scene. So be it. I shall talk about the world. My listeners will recognize that I am also talking about the campus.

1.

First on my list is what Paul Ehrlich calls "The Population Bomb." Too many people, with too little food, on a dying planet. About three and a half billion people today swarm the earth. Two billions of these are poorly fed--under-nourished, mal-nourished or starving. And births exceed deaths at such a rate that the world's population doubles every thirty-seven years. Within this decade--unless the excess of births over deaths is radically reduced--this world is in for a major famine. While I am speaking this one sentence, four people will have died of starvation--most of them children. If we continue to lower the death rate and do not radically curb the birth rate, within this decade you and I will sit down to our dinners in the United States, turn on the evening news, and watch the starving die, in living color. Neither the conscience of mankind nor the practicalities of international politics and warfare will permit the ten nations now producing more food than they eat, to survive peacefully in that day when the streets of a hundred other nations are choked with hunger riots. The population bomb is ticking.

Among the younger generation today, there are many who reject our affluent society. Ehrlich has a word for them. He says:

> "Nothing could be more misleading to our children than our present affluent society. They will inherit a totally different world, a world in which the standards, politics and economics of the 1960's are dead. As the most powerful nation in the world today, and its largest consumer, the United States cannot stand isolated. We are today involved in the events leading to famine; tomorrow we may be destroyed by its consequences."

The future which we now hold out to the present college generation is one in which their children will, at best, "lead miserable lives and die young." Hunger, the principal killer of men, threatens to become the killer of mankind.

2.

Second in my list of high-piling complaints is the other half of Ehrlich's argument--

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monumental waste.

It has suddenly become fashionable to talk about the pollution of the environment. It may even become politically wise to do something more than talk. For years we have been warned. Rachel Carson, the Reinows, and Wesley Marx have wasted their eloquence. We had to wait until the stench became unbearable to recognize that the Hudson and the Rhine were open sewers. Only slowly have New Yorkers come to realize that they live at "the terminus of a 3,000-mile-long sewer of atmospheric filth starting as far away as California and growing like a dirty snowball all the way." Much is made of the relationship between cigarette smoking and death; but each and every New Yorker in the street takes into his lungs the toxic equivalent of 38 cigarettes a day--the load of soot, sulphides, monoxide, hydrocarbons, and other pollutants spewed by autos, buses, trucks, and industry. And what metropolis among the 212 in this nation can boast of clean air?

Suddenly it has become politically fashionable to do something about the pollution of the air, the water, and the land. Your second-grader comes home from school to report that he is committed to saving the biosphere. Meantime, the bureaucratic jostling in Washington is exhibiting its endemic avidity for sharing the "Clean Environment" bonanza. What bonanza?--A paltry four billion of federal money, to induce state and local efforts to install adequate sewage disposal plants over the next several years. Well, it is a beginning. It is little. It is late. But it is a beginning. To rivet the nation's attention on our national disgrace is to afford a much-needed opportunity to quit fouling our nest. But what is at stake is not merely the quality of life, as some have wrongly avered. What is at stake is the survival of life in human form.

These first two items on my list are inextricably connected. Population growth and monumental waste together threaten to exceed the food supply and exhaust the environment. Neither the affluent society nor the effluent society has a future.

3.

There is some question as to how effectively we may be able to attack the twin problems of population growth and environmental exhaustion while at the same time we have to carry on an unpopular war in Vietnam. Without argument or elaboration, let us add this third item to our list of grievances--the dragging continuance of that undeclared war. And let us hope that the extrication is concluded before the "inevitable impermanence of public policy" reverses our efforts.

> Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,
> Waiting for the war to cease.....

Next item: The Kerner Report. And its follow-up entitled "Our Year Later."

The report said:

> "What white Americans have never fully understood--but what the Negro can never forget--is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."
>
> "Only a commitment to national action on an unprecedented scale can shape a future compatible with the historic ideals of American society. . . The major need is to generate new will--the will to

> tax ourselves to the extent necessary to meet the vital needs of the nation."

Tom Wicker commented that reading the report is "an ugly experience but one that brings, finally, something like the relief of beginning. What had to be said has been said at last, and by representatives of that white, moderate, responsible America that, alone, needed to say it."

That was March 1, 1968. In the ensuing year, 1,700,000 copies of the Report were sold. At least some of these must have been read. But when Urban America, Inc. and the Urban Coalition jointly examined the results one year later, the picture was not reassuring. There was a promise of programs for better housing in the inner city; but appropriations would have to wait for the ending of the Vietnam conflict. In most of the other program areas projected by the Kerner Commission, progress was hard to find. And as for the civil disorders which had occasioned the Kerner study in the first place, they had increased in number, while decreasing in intensity.

Meantime, what was happening to the ghetto? It was spreading, to include more territory; but it was not taking in greater numbers of people at the same rate. Instead, whole areas of hard-core slums were becoming depopulated, given over to the rats and the junkies. No new in-migrant group could be found for them, no poverty group desperate enough. And high-vacancy rates made for even higher, in city after city which stood in need of housing. Blight and abandonment pockmarked the spreading ghetto. The projection of trends during the first year after the Kerner Report showed that, unless radically different forces could be brought to bear, the picture of America in 1985 would be:

> "..an America of swollen metropolitan areas, black at the core and white at the fringes, with its problems. . .expanded beyond hope or solution."

The "new will" has not been generated.

But other things have been generated, among them a new self-confidence and pride within the black group and a new fear and hardness within the white. Blacks, for the most part, still want in, not out, of the mainstream of American life--but they want in on equal terms; and continuing delay in fulfilling that desire feeds the forces of separatism. What went wrong?

> "The Commission Report itself was received with loud official silence. It was released without White House ceremony, and Administration comment was scant. . .A poll just after its release found general agreement with many of the Report's recommendations, but there were two points of white dissent: 53 per cent of the white respondents did not concur in the finding that 'the riots were brought on mainly by white racism,' and 59 per cent refused to believe they were not organized."

And at the end of the first year after the Kerner report had been issued, sold in 1.7 million copies, and widely discussed in all the news media, the summary of real progress read thus:

> "Progress in dealing with the conditions of slum-ghetto life has

> been nowhere near in scale with the problems. Nor has the past year seen even a serious start toward the changes in national priorities, programs and institutions advocated by the Commission. The sense of urgency in the Commission report has not been reflected in the nation's response."

Moreover, on the fundamental question of whether the United States of America would, or would not, move toward an apartheid system embodying the values of the Union of South Africa, the summary of the first year after the Kerner report asserted that the year had been spent not in launching new policies but in following previously existing policies, with the precise results which the Kerner Commission had foreseen:

> "Some change, but not enough; more incidents but less full-scale disorder because of improved police and military response; a decline in expectations and therefore in short-run frustrations. If the Commission is equally correct about the long run, the nation in its neglect may be sowing the seeds of unprecedented future disorder and division. For a year later, we are a year closer to being two societies, black and white, increasingly separate and scarcely less unequal."

Whether customary lethargy and indifference, together with continuing belief in racial caste, would have been enough to prevent significant progress during the year, we shall never know. A new factor had entered the picture with the murders of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. The nation in general and most of official leadership had turned attention away from the basic problems of racial caste to stare with hypnotized fascination at the spectre of violence. Anger stalked the streets and fear gripped the home. For a brief moment, Congress considered doing something about firearms. A new presidential committee was created, headed by Milton Eisenhower, to look into the causes and prevention of violence.

5.

Violence thus becomes the fifth item on my list; and the Eisenhower report with its twelve impressive volumes of supporting materials is the source of information.

As a nation, we did not unite against the newly emerging threats to domestic tranquility, because we were accustomed, as a nation, to respond only to external threats--while permitting internal disorders to be contained by force and counter-force. The Eisenhower Commission put it this way:

> "When in man's long history other great civilizations fell, it was less often from external assault than from internal decay. Our own civilization has shown a remarkable capacity for responding to crises and for emerging to high pinnacles of power and achievement. But our most serious challenges to date have been external--the kind this strong and resourceful nation could unite against. While serious external dangers remain, the graver threats today are internal: haphazard urbanization, racial discrimination, disfiguring of the environment, unprecedented interdependence, the dislocation of human identity and motivation created by an affluent society--all resulting in a rising tide of individual and group violence."

The Eisenhower report and its twelve task force volumes amply document the fact that violence in this nation is endemic. Possibly because violence is an accepted pattern of reaction in America, the publication of the report on the causes and prevention of violence, while given adequate play in the news media, appears to have had about as much effect upon national policy and general citizen reaction as the dropping of a marshmallow on a featherbed. To be sure, violence became a primary issue in the presidential campaign; but the insights which were to be published by the Eisenhower Commission a few months later, did not inform the political debates. On the contrary, the demands for stern law enforcement (even for repression) were based on a half-truth, while the other half of that truth was seldom surfaced in the debates and never stoutly defended. Few--if any--in power, and few--if any trying to get in power, appeared to have a balanced understanding of what the Eisenhower Commission would say on December 10, 1969:

> "We believe that the twin objectives of the social order must be to make violence both unnecessary and unrewarding. To make violence unnecessary, our institutions must be capable of providing justice for all who live under them--of giving all a satisfactory stake in the normal life of the community and the nation. To make violence unrewarding, our institutions must be able to control violence when it occurs, and to do so firmly, fairly, and within the law."

Above all, there appeared to be little disposition to take up the theme which the Eisenhower report stressed in following in behind the Kerner report:

> "The way in which we can make the greatest progress toward reducing violence in America is by taking the actions necessary to improve the conditions of family and community life for all who live in our cities, and especially for the poor who are concentrated in ghetto slums. It is the ghetto slum that is disproportionately responsible for violent crime, by far the most acute aspect of the problem of violence in the United States today."

Instead, there appeared to be everywhere a disposition to turn away from the causes of violence and the essential effort to correct those causes, and to fix attention on the phenomenon of violence as something to be repressed. I say "phenomenon of violence," for surely that is what violence is--a surface expression, not an essential quality. Endemic it may be in America--but it is endemic like a disease, not as an inherent quality of human nature. Those who would claim that American violence is merely human nature at work in an imperfect society must reconcile their assertion with the amazing disparities in the incidence of violence as between the United States of America and sister nations. Our homicide rate, for example, is nearly five times that of Canada, nearly nine times that of England and Wales. Is our "human nature" so different, so depraved in comparison?

Being a phenomenon, not of the essence, violence nevertheless has a way of feeding on itself--as does many a biological disease. We have seen it on our campuses; but an even better example is found in contemporary France or Japan. Hundreds of campuses in Japan were completely closed down for a major portion of the past academic year because of student violence. And the Parisian newspaper, Le Monde, says that violence in the French university has "become a habit." The newspaper observes:

> "When one is not content with one's fate, one goes out into the street or one goes to one's adversary and one thumps on him. One

> speaks no more; one wishes simply to prevent others from speaking. And one hits out, joyously."

An inescapable part of violence as expressed by groups is a developed hatred, anger or contempt for others--and especially for persons who are symbols of authority, such as college presidents and deans, or magistrates and police. Carl Davidson, a principal spokesman for Students for a Democratic Society, has given one of the better expressions of the rationale of contempt both as a motivating emotion and as a procedure;

Summarizing the general aims and specific strategies of the Movement, he says:

> "What this all adds up to is strengthening our ability to wage an effective 'desanctification program' against the authoritarian institutions controlling us. The purpose of desanctification is to strip institutions of their legitimizing authority, to have them reveal themselves to the people under them for what they are--raw coercive power...People will not move against institutions of power until the legitimizing authority has been stripped away."

The procedures of vulgarity, obscenity, contumacy, derision, profanity, epithet and hyperbole are, by now, pretty well known on most campuses and in many a court room. None, in this country so far as I know, has yet reached the nadir of a performance in West Berlin where a student on trial calmly climbed onto the court room table, dropped his trousers, relieved his bowels, and wiped himself on the papers of his own trial. But, increasingly in the American scene, the dialogue is replaced by the confrontation as a deliberate matter of tactic and of long-range strategy. We are not too far away from the French prototype, where the act of disruption-and-violence is undertaken "joyously," in preference to discussion or reason.

Meanwhile, on the larger front, instead of moving aggressively to remove the causes of violence and to build the inclusive society which would make violence unnecessary, we witness an appalling development in the patterns of our cities. I previously referred to the way in which we appear to be moving toward "an America of swollen metropolitan areas, black at the core and white at the fringes." Add now to that the development of new protective measures designed to guarantee personal safety and the safety of property in view of mounting violence and the fear thereof. We would appear to be moving rapidly toward that day of which Milton Eisenhower recently warned--a day when the white worker and businessman surrounds himself with private armed guards while at work, and at evening jumps into his closed car and takes the freeway home to a protected enclave which is surrounded by high barbed wire and patrolled by more private police. Almost, it would appear, we are about to establish our own version of South African apartheid, but reversing the details by letting the blacks roam freely in the inner city and putting the whites behind suburban barricades. (If these words appear to be total fantasy, I suggest that those who have not visited Washington, D.C. in recent months, do so).

And all of these things we are doing in direct contravention of the prescriptions both of the Kerner report and the Eisenhower report. Instead of moving to correct the causes, we move to protect inequity and to repress the victimized for striking back.

To be sure, there are other forces at work, some of them sponsored by the Federal or other governments, others supported by private initiative and group guts. Bu he would be a bold man, indeed, who tried to assert on the record that

we have made more progress than we have lost ground in the twenty-four months since the Kerner Report was issued. On balance, we are losing the struggle against racism and its attendant violence: Such progress as we can discern is like sunlight glinting on a sea of blood and tears.

6.

I have listed five items: the population bomb, pollution of the ecosystem, the undeclared and unterminated war, racism and violence. These five sources and expression of our troubled times would appear to be adequate mandate for change both in society and the world at large and on campus--for every one of the five has its direct impact upon the campus. These five have been selected because they are causally interrelated, cannot be dealt with in isolation, must be attacked all together and at once. They cannot be picked off one by one like the leaves of an artichoke. But there remain other troublous and troubling items to be listed.

Number six is dope. As recently as six or eight months ago, it might have been possible to speak in other than strident tones about the relatively small minority of the younger generation who were reversing Karl Marx and making opiates the religion of the people. Today, when the drug subculture is rapidly becoming the dominant culture of tomorrow's citizens, humor would be a misleading luxury in this discussion.

There is no single, easy explanation for the growing use of drugs, from marijuana and other "soft" drugs through the hallucinogens and "speed" to the "hard" drugs like morphine and heroin. A former heroin addict, resident in Harlem, testifies that he became an addict "in order to shut my nose to the smell of urine in the hallway, to shut my eyes to the garbage under foot, and to shut my ears to the police sirens in the street." But a high school senior from a frivileged home in Westchester County says he uses the stuff for three reasons: "Because its there; because I like it; and because its a good way to tell the older generation to go to hell." And a college Junior in a woman's college says she takes her week end "trips" in order not only to escape the boredom and irrelevance of college life but also to discover her own real nature.

But whatever the reasons may be, the fact with which there is no argument is that there has emerged a whole new subculture which threatens to be the culture pattern of the immediate future. It cuts across all lines of race, religion, economic class and family or national origin. It is the culture of the dope-user which, in turn, now supports an entrenched and vicious criminal operation. It started on the East and West coasts and in a few midland cities like Chicago; but the "Great Heartland" should take little comfort in that fact. Listen to the president of the New York State Council on Drug Addiction: "Within a couple of years every high school and every college in the country will be inundated by heroin."

Primarily, this new culture is expressed among persons of college and high school and junior high school age. It has not yet bridged the generation gap. But for those who are in their early twenties, and right down through the teens to age twelve and below, the assignment for the day is not in a text book. It is in the needle. My city of New York today shows the rest of you where your cities (and campuses) will be in a few months. More young persons die of heroin in New York City today than because of "all the infectious diseases and all the muscular dystrophies and polio and parasitic diseases combined." Drug usage is not merely endemic. It is epidemic. The callous and cynical might look upon this growing prevalence of the drug-using culture as a possible answer to overpopulation.

They could point to the fact that the stampeding little lemmings who periodically commit mass suicide in Scandanavian waters are entirely from the younger generation--that this is merely one of nature's methods of taking care of the population explosion. I, for one, reject the suggestion that the oncoming generation be abandoned to self-destruction in its drug culture while the older generation carries on for the future. There is no impulse native to the human breast which could justify that conclusion.

But if education has anything at all to do with the molding of human character, the setting of ideals and goals for human society and the devising of means and institutions for reaching those goals, then the growth of the drug-culture is a mandate for change on the campuses. Up to this moment, we have not discovered how to check this scourge--much less eradicate it.

There are many other items which demand to be included in this laundry list. It is my purpose not to be exhausting tonight, so the list cannot be exhaustive. Venality in political and business life; discrimination in employment, at the behest of the unions which formerly claimed to be champions of justice and fair play; the irrelevance and triviality of the institutions of religion; the use of language not to convey meaning but to vent visceral billingsgate; the use of the sex act for spectator sport; the inversion of values to make the vulgar precious, the obscene prized, and the violent praised--these, and many others, will be on the agenda of this 25th National Conference on Higher Education, along with the six I have listed.

The time is now. It is now or never. The hoary traditions of the past are not adequate to the needs of the hour. Institutional inertia must be swept aside. Colleges and universities can no longer wait on the glacial movement of the generations, retreat into the ivory tower, rely on repression and indirection to get them through times of trouble. Administrators, students and faculty members <u>together</u> will come up with the answers to these problems--or, they will go down <u>together</u>, with the sinking ship.

On this ship of Earth which carries us all to a common destiny, the steerage is swarming with those who have nothing to drink but bilge, whose travel permits **never** let them up on deck for a breath of salt air, and whose bitterness is as great as it is understandable. A great many passengers in Third Class have visited in the steerage and returned to their comparatively better quarters in deep anger over the plight of their brothers. Not a few are looking for ways to scuttle the ship--never mind that they would go down with it. The echoes and the stench from the lower decks have long since overwhelmed Second Class and caused mild (though repressed) alarm on the Promenade Deck and in the First Class cabins. Perhaps someone ought to carry the word to the bridge.

Certainly, no amount of doubling the guard at the companionways will relieve the misery or cure the anger below decks. Nor does it do much good to hear the First Mate chew out the crew and call them "supercilious sophisticates." If those in First and Second Class don't like to have garbage thrown at them from a lower deck, they might consider dumping no more refuse down the hatch. We might, on this ship of Earth, even get to the point where, instead of trying to control trouble by battening the hatches, doubling the guard, and filling both the sick bay and the brig, we came to our senses and declared an Open Ship. Or is it too much to expect that the affluent and the privileged and the powerful will recognize the right of each man, woman and child, regardless of the circumstances of birth which wrote his ticket, to enjoy a full share of our common "Moment in the Sun?"